CHRISTIAN FIDELITY AND ITS REWARD.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

PHILADELPHIA,

On Sunday, January 2, 1876.

BY

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A SERMON.

THEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE YE STEADFAST, UNMOVABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD, FORASMUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.—1 Cor. xv. 58.

You will have come here this morning, Christian Brethren, expecting me, as has long been my wont on the recurrence of this Anniversary, to offer you some brief and terse Scripture as your text for the year. In place of this, I propose to you a text so comprehensive, that it covers the entire ground both of faith and practice, and may well be adopted as your motto and talisman, not for one year only, but for every remaining year of your lives.

It is the winding up—the practical application, rather—of that memorable argument, in which the great Apostle employs all the resources of his inexorable logic and all the splendor of his rhetoric, to vindicate the doc-

trine of the Resurrection. The singular eloquence of this chapter, which entitles it to a place among the sublimest passages even of Sacred Writ, reveals the estimate put by the Divine Spirit upon this doctrine as one of the vital truths of Christianity; while nothing could have been more apposite, nothing more characteristic of St. Paul, than the use he makes of it in the text, as supplying a powerful motive to fidelity in the Christian life. "Thanks be to God (such is the august conclusion of his unanswerable argument) which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And then instantly follows the grand practical lesson to which it points: "THEREFORE, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

There are three topics presented here which I propose to consider in their adaptation to ourselves, viz.:

An inflexible adherence to the evangelical faith:
and
An unreserved dedication to the service of God:
Both enforced by *a most inspiring motive.*

As regards the first of these topics, the qualifying words, "steadfast, unmovable," obviously refer to belief, as the next clause does to practice. Nor is the exhortation to be restricted to the matter immediately in hand. The Corinthian Christians must maintain, as against any capricious tendencies of their own minds and against all opposition from without, not only the doctrine of the resurrection, but its affiliated doctrines—the entire body of Scriptural truth. The language imports that this divine faith would be assailed. And herein the Apostle spoke to their own experience; for it had happened already among themselves. And it has been happening ever since. "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Most literally has this utterance of the Master been verified. As the history of nations has been largely a chronicle of wars; so the history of Christianity has been largely a record of conflicts between truth and error. If you would have a vivid apprehension of this fact, take down from your shelves any standard Ecclesiastical History, and, running your eyes over the table of contents, note how numerous are the chapters devoted to Polemics. From the

days of the Apostles until now, the evangelical faith has been an occasion (never a cause) of strife. The name of its adversaries is Legion. Perpetually varying their methods and implements, using weapons of every sort within the wide range extending from the gentle infusion of error and the subtle suggestions of an infidel philosophy, to the dungeon, the thumb-screw, and the stake, their hostility to God's truth has known no respite. Whatever lull there may have been in offensive demonstrations, has been employed in furbishing their armor and seeking fresh points of attack. And if anything be apparent, it is that Christianity has trod for eighteen centuries the path its Divine Founder trod for three years,—a path hallowed by His daily experience of ingratitude, hatred, and obloquy.

Nor is there any token that it is at present to be allowed a season of rest. Our age, like each preceding one, has brought into the arena its own skilled and well marshalled forces, to contest the palm with the ancient faith. The *animus* with which they hasten to the encounter, inspired by the self-glorying temper of this

boastful nineteenth century, recalls the bearing of the Philistine Colossus when he came out to meet the youthful Hebrew champion:—and peradventure the parallel may hold good to the end. The allusion here, as you will, of course, understand, is to that Scientific scepticism which, considering that it is only a few years old and scarcely out of its swaddling clothes, carries itself with a very unscientific arrogance towards the sacred writers. It is barely possible that if Moses and Isaiah and John and Paul (not to speak of their Master) should return to our earth to-morrow, they might be able to hold their own even in argument with our Darwins, Huxleys, and Tyndales. It is of no avail to reply, that Science cannot err; that its discoveries are of the nature of positive truth, and must therefore be implicitly received. Science has erred, a thousand times over. The science of our day is constantly exploding the theories and challenging the alleged facts, of the science of former days. What security have we that this process is not to go on; that the vaunted conclusions of our infallible explorers will not be subverted by the researches of the very next gen-

eration, or by some new school, of philosophers equally infallible? One of the most eminent and popular of these teachers only the other day publicly repudiated, in an Eastern city, opinions concerning the origin of matter which, as he stated, he held and inculcated both in books and lectures only a year ago. Is it quite philosophical and quite modest for such a man to ask the same people to believe that what he taught them as truth a twelve-month since, is no truth; and that what he tells them now is truth? How are they to know that he will not return next winter and repudiate this winter's teachings? and again the winter after, and so on indefinitely?

The incident lends confirmation to the lesson of the text. Be steadfast and unmovable in adhering to the faith, however it may be impugned by the scientists of the day. Let them first settle the *facts* of science among themselves. When this is done beyond controversy, it will be found that those facts are perfectly compatible with a true interpretation of the word of God. The Creator cannot speak one language in His works, and another in His word. Meanwhile, should objections from that source be thrust upon

you, it may be well to ask your critic how much he knows about the Book he would have you give up; whether he has ever examined the evidences which authenticate its supernatural origin; and what reply he has to give to that immense and cumulative body of testimonies, which has satisfied so many thousands of the great scholars, jurists, statesmen, and sages of the world, that holy men of God wrote this Book as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. There is, up to this moment, no proof before the world, that a single one of these learned writers who ask us to give up our faith in the Bible not only, but in a personal God, has made himself thoroughly acquainted with the grounds upon which Christianity rests its claims to our credence. That such men should imperiously call upon us to repudiate the Bible—and that, too, without offering anything except blank atheism to replace it—can only provoke the derision of thoughtful and candid minds. I refer to the subject not so much because of any pressure upon you from that quarter now, as because a word of caution to-day may be useful to you in the future.

There is another form of error as against which it behooves you to be 'steadfast' and 'unmovable' in maintaining the true faith. This is not, like the other, of recent date. In its germs it is coeval with the Apostles. Paul and John wrote of it both as an embryo growth in their day, and as prospectively developed into a gigantic system of heresy and tyranny. I esteem it as a just cause for thankfulness that I was led (in a way which need not be rehearsed here) to a thorough examination and extended discussion of this subject within the first decade of my ministry; and that I have continued, as occasion served, to admonish you of the corruptions, the unscrupulous ambition, and the proselyting arts, of the Church of Rome. I may be allowed to quote a single paragraph from a discourse preached here just thirty-five years ago, and published by my congregation.

"Opposition to Popery is, with the public, a capital offence. They can see nothing in it but bigotry. They forget that it was opposition to Popery which has secured to them an open Bible and the privilege of confessing their sins to God alone. They forget that opposition to Popery has

created the difference between our free, happy, and prosperous Republic, and the States of South America, which seem doomed to perpetual anarchy and depression. They forget that opposition to Popery has given to Europe all that she enjoys of civil and religious liberty. They forget that the progress of the Arts and Sciences, the mitigation of social evils, the diffusion of knowledge, the right understanding and observance of the reciprocal duties of princes and subjects, magistrates and people, and the improvement of mankind in rational and solid happiness, have for the last three centuries gone hand in hand with opposition to Popery. They forget that just in proportion as the opposition to Popery has been relaxed in Protestant countries, superstition and infidelity have grown apace, immorality has abounded, ignorance and discontent have prevailed among the people, and every great national interest has deteriorated."

Now as then, there are people who listen to such an arraignment of the Papacy, with the feeling that it savors of uncharitableness. The duty of charity towards *persons*, of kindness even towards our enemies, is distinctly enjoined in the

Scriptures. To cherish malice towards the members of the Romish communion, as such, is clearly a sin. But the highest esteem for them as individuals may not only sanction but demand of us uncompromising opposition to the system of error which holds them in bondage. 'A system of error'—of corroding, deadly error—it is; even more intensely so than it was thirty years ago. For within that period it has added to its list of essential dogmas, and laid upon the consciences of all its people as of the teachings of God Himself, the profane figment of the Immaculate Conception, and the most audacious, the most impious, the most blasphemous, of all the falsehoods it has ever propounded, the pretended Infallibility of the Pope. If anything further had been needed to identify this power with the *Anti-Christ* delineated in Second Thessalonians and in the Book of Revelation, these monstrous claims must surely have dispelled all misgiving. For what could exceed either in impiety or cruelty the crime of compelling millions of too confiding people to believe, under penalty of anathema, that God has made averments which contravene every line of his

word, and impugn every attribute of His glorious nature?

I counsel you, then, as American citizens, to withstand the crafty and persistent schemes of this alien Monarchy (for such it is) to subvert our Public school system, and, generally, to subordinate our politics to its purposes: and as Christians, to warn your children and your children's children against the devices of this great Apostasy for enslaving and destroying the souls of men. If any one see fit to brand this as bigotry, my answer is, that in a contest between Christ and Anti-Christ, where every man *must* choose his position, I, for one, do not mean to be found on the side of Anti-Christ. The time may come when you will need this caution—the more so, as Ritualism, that mischievous double of Romanism, goes about in the garb of an angel of light, with solicitations which may deceive even the elect.

There is a third aspect in which the injunction of the text may be regarded as having a special adaptation to our times. It has been alleged, far and near, that the Westminster Confession is losing its hold upon the Churches; that the pulpit no longer indulges in "doctrinal preaching;" that

congregations are impatient of such discussions; and that the general requisition now is, for a good and useful life, irrespective of creeds and all other "abstractions." It is quite possible that there may be some ground for these charges. A superficial, mammon-worshipping age may, very likely, prefer reading to thinking, and hearing to either; provided the hearing have to do, not with the abstract and the spiritual, but with the material and palpable. But what can be plainer than that truth is the proper aliment of the soul; and that the practice which is divorced from faith, can have no moral value? The revealed will of God is the foundation of all virtue and piety. That revelation was completed when the canon of Scripture was closed. Theology is not, like Astronomy and Geology, a progressive Science. It may vary in its methods of statement and illustration. But in its central truths it is as immutable as its Author. It is our conviction, yours and mine, that the theology taught by the Master, and before Him by Moses and David and Isaiah, and after Him by Paul and Peter and John, is the theology comprised in the Confession and Catechisms of our Church. The 'doctrines of grace,'

as they are termed, have ever been God's instruments for reforming, purifying, and enlarging His Church. They have had a vital agency in all genuine revivals of religion. They have moulded and inspired the strong men who have been conspicuous in defending and propagating the Gospel. They are to the Christian Economy, what the Ark of the Covenant was to the Levitical. These doctrines as embraced in the Symbols of the Reformed Communions, are, under God, the life of the Church and the hope of the world. It is an ill omen if they are falling into disparagement and neglect. If the pulpit be catering to a perverted popular taste, and administering to a restless, capricious generation, not what it needs but what it wants, so much the worse for the pulpit. Never in our history was there a time when the necessity was more urgent for the habitual exhibition of these great truths in the Sanctuary. The very activities of the Church, its noble charities, its manifold labors in disseminating the Gospel, augment the importance of this duty. See to it, Brethren, that ye be 'steadfast, unmovable' in adhering to the ancient faith. Let it be carefully instilled into the minds of your children, at home

and in the Sabbath School. And never allow it to be discredited or slighted in this pulpit. Let fidelity to God's truth ever take precedence with you above learning, or eloquence, or fiery zeal, or all these combined. It were alike a reproach to the pious dead, and an irreparable wrong to the living, should these walls ever cease to resound with those precious truths, sealed with a Saviour's blood, which have here brought life, and peace, and joy ineffable, to multitudes who were ready to perish.

The second topic mentioned in the text is, *an unreserved dedication to the service of God;* or, as the Apostle has put it, "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

This expression, "the work of the Lord," must be taken to comprehend whatever God has commanded, entire consecration, the enthronement of Christ in the heart to the exclusion of all rivals. It means growth in grace; and, to that end, the diligent and devout study of the Scriptures, prayer, public ordinances, Christian fellowship, and whatever helps we may have to the mortification of indwelling sin, and the culture of the gracious affections. It means not simply a religious pro-

fession, but a religious life. We have fallen upon days when this seems to be very imperfectly recognized. There have been times when the weapons of the world in its warfare with true godliness, were detraction, ridicule, and violence. Now that Christianity has become too formidable for that style of assault, it is complaisant and caressing. It will do anything for the Church, provided only it may be allowed by the Church to expound the Scriptures for it, and prescribe its morals and measures. In our great cities we are drifting towards a condition of things, in which the line so sharply drawn by the Saviour between the Church and the world, is becoming very dim. Many who don His livery on the Sabbath, put it carefully away for the other six days. And it would embarrass these persons if they were required to point out a single custom or habit common to the avowed votaries of the gay world which they regard as interdicted to themselves.

Nor is it in social life only that the Christianity of the day betrays its need of a fresh baptism of the Spirit. The taunt is constantly heard along the walks of business, "Professors of religion are no better than other men." This, being interpreted

means, not that there are no Christians who bear the name worthily, but that there are not a few who carry into their financiering and trafficking the equivocal arts employed by unscupulous schemers.

The influence exerted by these two classes in the Church, professors who go hand in hand with the world in all its frivolities, and professors who practice deception and finesse in their business, is pernicious in the highest degree. Not to advert to other results, let it suffice to say, that we have here one of the chief stumbling-blocks in the way of the unconverted. Very foolish it is for any sinner to plead the misconduct of other sinners, whether in the Church or out of it, as extenuating his own neglect of religion. But every pastor has been met with the rebuff, many times over: "Why should I come into the Church? I see professors of religion doing things which I would not do." The Saviour would say to such an objector: "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." But men will do this, nevertheless; and it is an unfeeling and wicked thing for professing Christians to furnish them with a pretext for doing it.

Very different is the stamp of religion incul-

cated in the text—the only type of piety, in fact, known to the New Testament. It is no mere negative endowment—a character undefiled with flagrant inconsistencies. This it is, but much more than this. The model St. Paul holds up to us—and which we find, as he would not, in himself—is that of one who lives only to do 'the work of the Lord;' to 'abound' in that work; yea, to abound in it 'always.' Beyond this he could not go. Less than this it were impossible for his and our Master to require. For to what end did the Lord of glory become a man of sorrows; to what end does He call sinners out of darkness into His marvellous light; but that He may have the reward of His sufferings in "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," "zealous of good works"? What He asks, is; not permission to tarry in a heart of which the world still holds sovereignty; but in hearts which will tolerate no rival; which offer Him crown and throne and sceptre, and that, not reluctantly, but joyfully. Other monarchs may take up with an outward homage; it is all they can command. He will accept only the homage of that true love which brings its 'gold, and frank-

incense, and myrrh,' and casts them at His feet, with the feeling, that its choicest gifts are a poor return for His boundless compassion. Where this sentiment prevails, it must needs control and hallow the life. In just so far as you are imbued with it, you will choose the Lord's work in preference to any other work. You will abound in that work. You will delight in serving Him with your property, your talents of whatever kind, and your personal service. His cause will be more precious to you than any earthly interest. Like Himself, you will 'love the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.' Where it is in your power, you will 'go about doing good.' If feeble health or domestic cares forbid this, you will honor Him, not grudgingly, with your substance. If you have neither money nor leisure, you may still 'abound,' by setting a godly example and conscientiously discharging the duties of your station. If visited with sickness or affliction, in the exercise of patience, resignation, filial confidence, and habitual aspirations after nearness to God, you may 'abound' in His work, as really as the most active laborer in His vineyard. And sick or well, rich or poor, learned

or illiterate, old or young, you may evince your gratitude and help forward His kingdom in the world, by earnest and importunate prayer.

The Apostle enforces both these lessons by *a most cogent motive:* "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." This is what the logicians call a 'negative pregnant'—a negative which is really an emphatic affirmative. When he says, "Your labor is not in vain," he means that it will be requited with a princely reward. Fidelity to Christ, whether in the way of maintaining the truths He taught or of leading a godly life, does indeed carry its own reward; for there must needs go along with it an approving conscience and a sense of Divine favor, which are a perpetual feast. But St. Paul looks far beyond this. It is one of the grand characteristics of our religion, that it not only puts upon a man the easiest of yokes in this world, but provides for him the purest and most exalted of all pleasures hereafter. Foreseeing how much we might need precisely this stimulus to counteract our indolence and selfishness, the Holy Spirit has enlivened with it every part of the New Testament, and held it up to us in every possible aspect. To quote

a tithe of what He has said on the subject, would consume the whole time allotted to the present service. Let me refresh you with a very few of these precious Scriptures. "All things are yours, whether the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come, all are yours." "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His throne." "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor." "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." "An exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

It would seem incredible that words like these

should be intended for us. Who are we that we should aspire to distinctions which the Seraphim might covet? Simply to have our sins forgiven and our hearts of stone turned into hearts of flesh—to be released from the bondage of the law and reconciled to God—is an infinitely greater boon than we are entitled to. And here the King of Kings stoops to lift us to His throne, throws wide open to us the doors of His treasure-house, and says, one by one, to every ransomed sinner, "All that thou seest here is thine!" Finite labor, and an infinite reward. A day of sorrow, and an eternity of joy.

And if the cup of cold water is to be remembered, what honors will be heaped upon those who have followed Christ with an unfaltering step; who have been steadfast and immovable in vindicating His truth, and who have always abounded in His work? We read the answer to this question in passages like those just recited; but they are too grand to be compassed by our faculties. It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive the glories of that bright abode,

"The mansion of Creation's Architect,
The palace of the Everlasting King."

Could we interrogate some of those faithful disciples who once toiled with us here, and have now entered into rest, they would tell us with rapture that their labors had not been in vain in the Lord; but how could they portray to our sin-clouded minds, the transcendent glories of the heaven of heavens? Something like this they might respond about those beatific realms:—

"Here in these boundless provinces of light
We who once suffered with a suffering Lord
Reign with Him in His glory, unto each
According to His power and proven love
His rule assigned. But Zion is our home;
Jerusalem, the City of our God.
O happy home! O happy children here!
O blissful mansions of our Father's house!
O walks surpassing Eden for delight!
Here are the harvests reaped once sown in tears;
Here is the rest by ministry enhanced;
Here is the banquet of the wine of heaven,
Riches of glory incorruptible,
Crowns, amaranthine crowns of victory,
The voice of harpers harping on their harps,
The anthems of the holy Cherubim,
The crystal river of the Spirit's joy,
The Bridal palace of the Prince of Peace,
The Holiest of Holies—GOD is here."*

* "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever."

This is the portion of the ransomed in glory, and this is in store for every true disciple who dedicates himself and his all to Jesus of Nazareth.

What, then, is the use we are to make of the exhortation before us?

It is your privilege and mine, dear Brethren, to belong to a Church which has not been altogether unmindful of the obligations here inculcated. Very imperfect has been our obedience. Much of time and talent and substance has been withheld from the Master, which ought to have been laid at His feet. Selfishness, pride, and sloth have too often vitiated our motives. Alike as individuals and as a Church, we have cause for deep humiliation when we contrast the unutterable goodness of God to us, with the poor return we have made Him. Yet has He condescended to dwell with us, and to employ our humble instrumentality in promoting the furtherance of the Gospel. It cannot, I repeat, be alleged against us, that we have perverted or suppressed the truth; nor, again, that we have held the truth as a barren and inoperative orthodoxy. This Church

has, from the beginning, been honorably identified with that great scheme of Evangelism which is the chief glory of the present century. You have "remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." While sustaining our metropolitan charities, you have long held a modest pre-eminence among the congregations which minister to the comfort of our faithful Home Missionaries, and this, without neglecting the claims of the Foreign field. Two solid and beautiful edifices, thronged every Sabbath with devout worshippers, the West Spruce Street Church and the Hollond Memorial Chapel, attest at once your gratitude to God, and your enlightened zeal for the building up of Christ's Kingdom. Added to this, have been countless offices of Christian counsel, sympathy, and active benevolence, in your individual capacities, which have their only chronicle in the Book of God's remembrance.

If we review this record with some satisfaction to-day, we nevertheless give all the glory of it to Him who has bestowed both the means and the disposition to serve Him, and deeply lament that we have not loved Him more and served Him

better. This, indeed, suggests the proper lessons for the future.

Be it your care to cultivate an intelligent and discriminating acquaintance with the doctrines of grace. The pernicious liberalism of the day, as already observed, is intolerant of creeds. Set your watch there; nor there alone. For it finds an ally in quite an opposite quarter. The spirit of "Christian union" is abroad in greater strength than at any former period of this century. A most beneficent spirit it is which is diverting attention from the points in which the evangelical churches differ, to the points in which they agree; and turning their weapons from each other's breasts, against their common adversaries. But every good here brings its peril. We must be careful lest we permit the grateful tide of fraternal love to drift us away from our firm anchorage. A goodly fellowship with other denominations is entirely compatible with an inflexible adherence to our own system of doctrine. And no considerations of kindly feeling or outward unity, will justify us in sacrificing or holding back any part of what we believe to have been the faith once delivered to the saints. The very activities of the Church

clothe thorough doctrinal teaching with an augmented importance. To lengthen the cords without strengthening the stakes, would be the sure prelude to disaster. The present is no time for restricting the pulpit to mere hortatory and sentimental preaching; nor for confining Sunday Schools to lessons in which Christians of every name can unite. Now, if ever, the *Catechism* should have its place in every Presbyterian Sabbath School; and one entire session a month should be accorded to it. This arrangement may be urged, as on other grounds, so also because there is reason to fear that the ancient usage of household catechising has largely fallen into desuetude. In our city at least, the churches have, with some honorable exceptions, wrested the Sabbath evening from the family convocation; and have thus deprived Christian parents of the most suitable, in many cases the only, opportunity they have for the religious instruction of their children. If the catechism is to be ejected first from the family, and then from the Sunday School, it requires no prophet to predict how much the next generation will care for the distinctive doctrines of our Church.

It is pleasant to know that up to this time you have kept to the "old paths," not only in your theology, but in your *methods* of doing the work of the Lord. May not the hope be expressed, that you will never desert these well-trodden ways, however antiquated they may appear to your neighbors? Let due praise be given to the energy and liberality which characterize the prevalent Christianity. Let us gratefully acknowledge the Divine mercy in waking up the lay talent of the Church, and enlisting it in the service of God. Let us be thankful for the great army of workers who are spread over the broad field, sowing the seed and reaping the harvest. But we are not called upon to sanction all the ways and means through which this activity expresses itself. Not to be uncharitable, it looks as though the Church had copied rather freely the tactics of the world. A bustling age it is—graced with noble traits; and if deformed with some blemishes, eminently free from the vice of self-contempt. It has no idea of doing things in a corner; or of hanging up drums and trumpets as mere decorations. And is there not a style of

piety abroad which breathes a kindred spirit; which habitually makes its appeals to pride, to ambition, to emulation; which craves notoriety, and droops if unapplauded; which (if so vulgar a comparison may be allowed) prefers the noisy side-wheel to the silent screw, even at the hazard of less freight and smaller returns? This ostentatious religion puts on a very specious garb, and pleads for tolerance on the ground: "Others welcome me, and therefore you must." But it has never gained much foot-hold among you. I dare not say that no impurity has tainted our motives; nor that the frivolity which shades into irreverence, has never defiled our Sunday School commemorations. But I may and do claim for you, that the pervading tone of your ceaseless and manifold labors, in every department of your work, has been the reverse of all this; that you have drawn your inspiration from a higher source; and that you have sought and found your recompense, not in being seen of men, but in being approved of God. Nor may I refrain from adding, that after forty years' observation, I cannot contrast these two methods, the tranquil and the boisterous, the modest and the gairish, the reverential and the profane,

without deciding that yours is "the more excellent way." And if my counsel can avail anything, you will *never* depart from it.

As to a large proportion of those whom I am addressing, the service you have rendered to Christ, has been in connection with this Church. I may fitly, then, ask you to cherish the Church in the future, as you have in the past. Every congregation has its own peculiar life. With the life of this congregation, your own lives have been intertwined. Here, it may be, is the theatre upon which occurred the most memorable transaction recorded in your history. Here the Almighty Spirit condescended to meet you, and to lead you, a willing, grateful captive to the cross. Here you have been instructed, comforted, and sanctified. Here your strength has been renewed in waiting upon God, and your spirit refreshed with the bread of heaven. Here your kindred and friends have been linked, their hearts with yours, in the only bonds which are indissoluble and eternal. And from this fold many whom you loved with the tenderest affection, have exchanged the precarious and unsatisfying care of a poor under-shepherd, for the sheltering arm and the unfailing sympathy and the never-ending

fellowship of the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. What could exceed the sacredness of associations like these? Very humble is our place of worship: but if it has been to you the house of God and the gate of heaven, it must have attractions in your eyes beyond those conferred upon other edifices by the splendor of their architecture, or the eloquence of their ministrations. Be it your care to *manifest* for this Church the love it has a right to claim from you. Do not forsake it. Cleave to it, and to one another. Attend faithfully upon its ordinances. Whatever changes may take place, let nothing alienate your attachment nor chill your solicitude for its prosperity. Sustain with a generous hand its various schemes of benevolence. In particular, let the beautiful Chapel you have reared for Christian work, continue to share in your hearty sympathies and earnest prayers. Never have you undertaken anything for the Master, which God has been pleased to crown with a more signal blessing: and it were a reproach to your good name, should that Mission be denied either the funds or the workers essential to its success.

There are few of our Anniversaries, personal, social, or religious, the brightness of which is not

dimmed with some shadow. To myself, this New Year's Sabbath would shine with a purer lustre, but for the reflection that there are those here to whom I have long preached the Gospel apparently in vain. You have given me your more than respectful attention in the Sanctuary, and your esteem and confidence in private life. But you have not received my Master. Throwing wide open your houses and your hearts to me; you have had no welcome for Him—albeit He has been daily knocking for admission for ten, twenty, possibly twice twenty years. Knowing as I do what must be the inevitable, the appalling, the irretrievable result of this ungrateful treatment of your best Friend, if persisted in, is it strange that this Festival should come to me with its tinge of sadness? And will you not at length cease from this criminal indifference to the measureless love of Christ, and *begin a New Year with a new life?* Not to repeat arguments often pressed in vain, there is one consideration proper to the present time, which is clothed with the greatest possible solemnity and tenderness. We may not doubt that the Holy Spirit is amongst us. With gentle but persuasive power has He been

gliding from heart to heart, loosening the bonds of earth and sin, and setting the captives free. Never have you had, never *can* you have, a more propitious time for making your peace with God. *Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.* Many are calling to Him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Is all this nothing to *you?* Have you no soul to be saved? Can you afford to let Him pass out of sight and hearing without presenting your appeal for mercy? And if you again reject Him after thus meeting Him, as it were, face to face, can you expect Him hereafter to return to you?

To conclude this too long discourse, the season will not fail to awaken its own reflections. Standing as we do between the meeting years, your thoughts, dear Brethren, will busy themselves both with the past and the future. The loved and lost will gather around you, and renew the joys and sorrows they once shared with you—joys now turned with you to sorrows, but for the assurance that all their sorrow has been turned to unmingled joy. With eager eyes you scan the impenetrable curtain which conceals the future, if, peradventure, some opening fold may afford even

a momentary glimpse of what is to be. But our Father loves you too well for this. One thing only we know: that this is not our rest; that the sad breaking-up of households is to go on; that the sacred ties which bind us together in families and in Churches, must, one by one, be sundered; but that, through the Divine mercy, these inevitable changes are simply steps which lead up to the City of the Great King. There, Beloved, He waits to welcome you; and, in bringing you to Himself, He will restore to you all who have gone before. The Lord prepare you every one for a place among that blood-washed company.

"And now, Brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it, not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?

For ye are our glory and joy." "Therefore, my dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away."

"Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."